

The William Culver House,  
Forty-Fort, Pennsylvania.

H.A.B.S. No. Pa., 240.

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*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Pennsylvania

Historic American Buildings Survey  
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97 South Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

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THE WILLIAM CULVER HOUSE.

278 River St., Forty-Fort, Pa.

Luzerne County, Pennsylvania.

William Culver, Sr., who built the "William Culver House", in the year 1820, was born in New Jersey in 1795 of English decent; he came to Luzerne County when young, engaging in farming in a hilly section back of what is now the borough of Wyoming. The section which Mr. Culver settled in is only a few miles from the location of the home built in Forty-Fort a few years later, which section eventually came to be known as "Culver's Hill".

Mr. Culver evidenced considerable forethought in building the home before he was married, in order that he might have a home to shelter his intended family.

On December 27, 1821, he received the original deed for the plot of land on which the home was built, from the Proprietors of Kingston Township, which at that time included Forty-Fort, for a consideration of one hundred and twenty six dollars (\$126.00), the original Land Grant having been given the Proprietors of Kingston Township by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in the year 1812.

The "William Culver House" stands over a historic spot in the annals of Wyoming Valley; the back yard of which was formerly the southeastern extremity of the old fort built in 1770 by the first forty settlers from Connecticut, from which settlement the community of Forty-Fort derived its name. From this fort, on July 3, 1778, marched three hundred and sixty-eight old men and boys under the command of Colonel Zebulon Butler of Revolutionary fame, to a terrible slaughter by the enemy force of about eleven hundred Indians, Tories, and British Regulars, under the leadership of the British Major John Butler. Several heavy logs of the original foundation of the fort were unearthed by Mr. William T. Pettebone, the present owner and occupant of the house, when excavating for a cellar shortly after his purchase of same in the year 1883.

William Culver, Jr., born June 3, 1828, was the last of the Culver's to have possession of the home, which he acquired by virtue of a deed dated February 8, 1869, the Grantor being an older brother, David. He was educated in the Public Schools, and at the age of 20 engaged as a boatman on the Morris Canal for two years, and upon returning to Luzerne County, he entered the profitable profession of building boats, or "Arks", as they were called, which were used to transport anthracite coal on the Susquehanna river to tidewater. The art of building these arks flourished until the advent of the railroads. They were navigated by four men; were 90 feet in length, 16 feet wide, with a depth of 4 feet; and capable of carrying sixty tons of coal; the cost of labor and material constructing same amounted to approximately \$70.00. Probably about two out of every three arks reached their destination, as the others were left on the rocks in the rapids of the river, or went to the bottom, due to the difficulties encountered in navigating the arks, as they were in almost constant danger from rocks in the river bed during the journey. They were floated down the river, and upon reaching their destination were sold for the value of the lumber used in construction, thereby relieving the crew of the arduous task of towing the arks back to the shipping point.

With the entry of the railroad into the valley, the building of these arks gradually diminished, and eventually ceased entirely. The mining of anthracite coal increased yearly, developing as it is to this day, the major industry of Luzerne County.

William Culver, Jr., married April 5, 1850, to Mary A., daughter of Richard and Effie (Miller) Crosby, natives of Pennsylvania, and of Irish and German descent. By this union there were four children, two of which died at an early age; Mylert L., a painter, born May 15, 1852; and Lutitia J., born February 15, 1858, and still living at the age of 81 years, and residing at 90 Walnut Street, Forty-Fort, a few blocks from the old home on River Street.

Mylert L., married Lorretta Rennard, daughter of Adam Rennard; they had nine children.

Lutitia J., married William O. Thomas, an engineer of Plymouth, Pa., (they had two children: Emma S., and William Jr.). Mrs. Thomas has a remarkable memory at the age of 81 years, being in possession of all her faculties, and uses glasses only when reading.

The ownership of the home passed into the hands of John Reichard, March 19, 1877, who in turn sold the property to its present owner and occupant, Mr. William T. Pettebone, on September 1, 1883, for a consideration of thirty-five hundred dollars (\$3500.00). Mr. Pettebone, at the age of 83 years, furnished considerable valuable historical information concerning the Culver's and the old house. Mr. Culver died in the year 1912, aged 84 years.

The Culver's are numerous, their name being represented in various States of the country in connection with offices of trust and responsibility in various stations of life; but, practically, they are producers, rather than consumers.

The "William Culver House" is of frame construction of Early American Colonial design; all timbers and beams are morticed and tenoned and fastened together with oak pins. The superstructure is of 2" x 4" studs, set 16" on centers and 4" x 4" corner posts all braced and filled in between with straw and clay, or mud. The siding is nailed directly to the studs, and on the inside for wood lath, are used 1" x 10" boards split lengthwise with hammer and chisel until they are twice their depth, and then the plaster is applied directly to them. The flooring is of 1" tongue and grooved boards of random widths dressed on the upper side only. All interior and exterior trim staircase; doors, windows, and front entrance doorway are of Colonial design of that period.

Historical information obtained from the following;

Mrs. Lutitia Thomas, aged 81 years, 90 Walnut street, Forty-Fort, Pa., daughter of William Culver, Jr.

Mr. William T. Pettebone, age 83 years, owner and occupant of the Culver House since 1883.

"History of Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Wyoming Counties", by S.B. Nelson.

"History of Hanover Township and Wyoming Valley", by Henry Plumb.

"History of Certified Township of Kingeton (Pa.), by William Brewster.

Luzerne County Deed Books.

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